

## PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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### MENTAL STEREOTYPES IN THE ORTHODOX TRADITION

The article deals with the specificity of Orthodox mental stereotypes in Ukrainian society and their religious and mythological basis. The role of religious stereotypes as one of the most important factors influencing the formation and transformation of Ukrainian religious identity is determined. The influence of a religious stereotype as a marker of confessional belonging, a factor of awareness of an individual of belonging to a religious community is substantiated, which functioning as a fragment of the religious picture of the world, transforms the subjective perception of religion into an imperative for all members of the community. Stereotypical forms of traditional mythological structures are established, that realize the attraction of the believer to inertia and conservatism.

**Keywords:** mentality, stereotype, Orthodox stereotype, mental stereotypes, identity.

The phenomena of secular and religious, differing in their peculiarities, in the everyday life of the Ukrainian believer are dialectically interconnected. In a broad sense, on the one hand, there is a tendency to increase the influence of religion in society; on the other hand, many problems are directly connected with ensuring the harmony between secularism and religiousness. An analysis of these issues requires the use of a methodological approach, which takes into consideration the fact that modern society functions in conditions of secularization and secular state. Given this, in a legal state and civil society, there are great opportunities for achieving harmony between secularism and religiosity on the basis of tolerance.

For centuries, national communities were influenced by religion, prevalent in a particular area. The peculiarities of religious domestic practices in different countries were transformed under the influence of only national culture and history. National culture influences the peculiarities of religious ritualism as if synthesizing religious consciousness and national traditions into a conglomerate of values, ideas and ideals, which suggests the existence of national-religious pictures of the world as integrity.

The formation of the Ukrainian believer mentality essentially determines the nature of religion, which actualized the archetypes that influence the formation of religious consciousness. The predominance in society of religious values is accompanied by the formation of confessional consciousness, which is the core of stereotypes that has mental rooting. Confessional consciousness interacts with other structural components of consciousness, so the combination of a set of ideas, knowledge and attitudes, which are detected and assimilated in the process of ontogenesis, accumulated through the life experience of a person and an ethnic community, led to the formation and development of ethnic syncretism. Its features in Ukraine are expressed in customs, holidays, folklore, literature, architecture, music, behavioral skills, moral norms, in other words, in the components of culture, which are carriers of ethnic. Cultural Matrix is a daily ritual with a concentrated expression of ethnic mythology and history, the basis of borrowings and innovations, which preserves the relative memory of mythological thinking and the mythological effect of previous eras.

The spiritual picture of the world of the Ukrainian people reflects the features of Orthodox culture and morals; it was formed on the territory of Ukraine under the influence of Ukrainian national tradition, Ukrainian history and intercultural relations. Religious and national pictures of the world are in constant interaction, this creates a general picture of the world of Ukrainians, in which religious values are organically part of national identity structure.

Thus, in modern Orthodox identification, a persistent trend is the predominance of the cultural factor. Orthodoxy moves toward cultural identity due to the ideological vacuum in society, the weakness of the civic consciousness, the challenges of globalization and the Soviet atheistic heritage. Not the last role played by the phenomenon of historical memory, according to which this identity is considered to be

traditional, whereas in fact it undergoes substantial transformations. The Orthodox identity of a Ukrainian believer acquires a great deal of cultural identity through, that the cultural identity "I am Orthodox" has a wider manifestation than a religious identity, "I am an Orthodox Christian". Thus it can be stated, that the person often considers himself Orthodox not because he believes in God, but because he is baptized and lives in the country with Orthodox traditions, thanks to which, along with the national culture, he feels a spiritual affinity with the Church<sup>1</sup>.

Practice shows that the Orthodox identity does not stipulate other requirements, except spontaneous faith, confessional self-identification, and at least weak attempts at churching formation. The spiritual needs and personal experience of faith and religion constitute the sacred nucleus of Orthodox identity; its outer shell, combined with cultural symbols and practices, adapts this experience in the social world. Clearly, when the Orthodox identity is accompanied by the adoption of the appropriate way of life, then its subjective significance is deeper. It defines the system of values of the individual, a variety of life choices, under the influence of which identity becomes Orthodox in all aspects, including civic.

It is known that any denominational identity is based on the acceptance of one doctrine for all followers of Faith. Thus, a believer who wishes to be Orthodox must coordinate deeds and judgments with the texts of the Holy Scripture and the traditions of the Holy Translation, that is, identify with the values laid down in them. However, even while maintaining faithfulness to the truth of Orthodoxy in all words and deeds, the individual character of the way of life leads him to "specialization" within the Orthodox confession, creates different variants of the embodiment of Orthodox identity according to social characteristics.

In the conditions of the transformation of confessional identity, in particular of the Orthodox, the constancy and conservatism of religious stereotypes become important. The emergence of religious stereotypes is related to the need to integrate the truth of God within the limits of human understanding; it arose at a certain stage of development of society. Religious concepts were embodied in dogmas, rituals that still remain stereotypes of consciousness and behavior. There is a connection of stereotypes with archetypes, myths, superstitions, settings, since the construction and reproduction of a religious identity contains symbolic, figurative and value components. The basis for the emergence of ethnoreligious stereotypes, which can be positive or negative, is using by participants of the interaction of incomplete, distorted images, constructed from current items of the moment. Religious organizations implement specific behavioral programs, aimed at curbing the tendency toward individualization, increasing the variability of behavior, using also stereotypes that liberate a person from making individual decisions in typical situations. In rites and customs as types of stereotyped behavior, the syncretic part of ethnoreligious stereotypes is clearly expressed. A religious stereotype has the ability to influence non-religious people as justifying the perception of the church or religion and the attitude towards them. The change in stereotypes in everyday religious consciousness is very slow. Today, when the way of life of Orthodox believers is transformed, stereotypes that accumulate standardized collective experience help to orient in everyday life.

Stereotypes are formed under the influence of the unconscious collective rethinking of information by the socio-cultural environment and with the help of purposeful information influence. Among them, there are auto-stereotypes, that embody the ideas of the Ukrainian Orthodox believers about themselves, their religious community and have positive character and hetero-stereotypes, which reflect the attitude of the community or its members on the part of representatives of other communities, including non-religious ones.

Religious hetero-stereotypes in Ukrainian society include the notion of the role of women in the family and society. Stereotypes regarding men and women formed in society led to the definition of the status of a certain gender. Despite the fact that the mental approach considers these relationships from a neutral position, but still includes the idea of an unequal distribution of resources by mental feature, which is attributed to the individual. That religion is capable of distinguishing certain values and ideals for a person, it is possible to give reasoned answers to the questions of the present by focusing on them.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, there is particular interest in the issue of mental equality in religion, because it formed and laid down certain mental bias and stereotypes. Awareness of the

<sup>1</sup> Борейко, Ю. (2015). Національний чинник у формуванні православної ідентичності в сучасному українському суспільстві. *Наукові записки Національного університету «Острозька академія». Серія «Історичне релігієзнавство», 12, 62.*

injustice of established church practices generates the desire to achieve mental equality in the religious and spiritual sphere, which is due to the development of self-consciousness of women who, having certain spiritual needs, have resorted to criticizing the sexist arguments of the church. The researcher of this problem V. Sukovata notes, analyzing the emergence of feminist and mental studies in theology, as a result of the development of women's self-consciousness, the most active women demanded the introduction of mental egalitarianism in religion and theology and the recognition of women's merits in the development of spirituality, "referring to examples from the Bible, also reviewing a number of discriminatory practices that manifest themselves in prohibiting the study of women's sacred texts, the teaching of theology and the conduct of service"<sup>1</sup>.

To some extent, the reasons for the appearance of these stereotypes are in the content of the Scriptures itself, which contains a well-known tale of the fall from grace, where the act of women is often understood as aiding of Satan, as a result of which mankind was punished by God. According to the national researcher N. Chukhim, "the starting point in understanding human nature, which largely set the paradigmatic vision of the mental problem for Christian thinking and the whole of European culture, is the story of creation and fall, with which the Bible begins"<sup>2</sup>. Inequality between the sexes is expressed in the emphasis on the seclusion of women because she comes from Adam's rib, which emphasizes her sinfulness. On the other hand, one can hardly accuse Christianity of looking at a woman as a lower creature, because it is the only religion that proclaimed the highest and most perfect representative of the human race of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Her humility Joseph is explained by the possibility of subjugating a more perfect creature to a less perfect because the attitude of obedience in Christianity is determined not by quality, but by functions.

The main source of these stereotypes is traditional literature, which is presented exclusively by the men-authors and contains a discriminatory attitude towards a woman in the Church, in particular, austerity benefits for monks. Religious stereotypes about the attitude towards women in society originate from a patriarchal religious heritage, which laid the foundations for the undivided domination of men in the public and spiritual spheres. The religious background has the majority of traditional stereotypes, which involves limiting the civil activity of women to private life, assigning men and women different rights and opportunities in society.

Denominations of Christianity differ in relation to the role of women in society and in the church. The question of women's ordination was in the epicenter of attention and caused heated discussion in various religious organizations, becoming an important challenge for many of them. A view of this problem in terms of Orthodox doctrine is conservative. According to church canons, women are denied the right to the holy san, and discussions about women's ordinances were less intense than among Catholic theologians, clerics and parishioners themselves, although some Orthodox theologians and priests emphasize the importance of a broad dialogue on this issue within the Orthodox tradition. It should be noted that a significant number of women believers, but very often neglected their needs, although it would be appropriate to allow them to participate in church life and to fulfill their divine vocation with the greatest benefit in disclosing their personality.

The everyday life of modern believers is also determined by Orthodox traditionalism that largely predetermines the regulation of all aspects of their lives – from appearance to human behavior. These instructions are very pronounced among ordinary believers. The clothes of an Orthodox woman should emphasize the modesty of its owner, so she needs to be dressed in a long skirt and a blouse or a shirt with a closed collar and sleeves to the elbow and a scarf. Women are forbidden to use cosmetics, have long nails and cut hair. The appearance is consistent with the manner of behavior that involves lowered eyes, silent voice, restrained smile, etc. Significantly relaxed demands on the appearance of men, whose elements are often a costume without a tie, a zippered top-shirt of light color.

We note that the national mental tradition was formed in the domain of Orthodox values, which for centuries was reflected in literature, art, national-cultural symbols and thus stuck in public consciousness and public practice. The Ukrainian Orthodox picture of the world reflects the specificity of Orthodox culture and morality, which were formed on the territory of Ukraine under the influence of national history and between cultural ties, feminine identity in accordance with the national perception of biblical texts and

<sup>1</sup> Суковата, В. (2004). *Гендер і релігія. Основи теорії гендеру*. Київ: К.І.С., 384.

<sup>2</sup> Чухим, Н. (2006). *Візія жінки у західній філософській традиції (від античності до модерну)*. Київ: Київський інститут гендерних досліджень, 56.

holy patristic literature. Christian philosophical reflection in the Ukrainian tradition lays down some basic principles on which the Orthodox picture of the world is based, that finds its expression in the tradition of Kyiv Christianity. Among them we can distinguish the following postulates: the priority of respecting the personality as the image and likeness of God; an understanding of personal freedom as God's gift; synergy of the spiritual and bodily essence of man; evaluation of mind and cognitive abilities as a sign of the presence of charisma in human nature; Sophie logical-dialectical method of theology<sup>1</sup>. Determination of the basic principles of female essence through the prism of national tradition contributes to the detection of the existential content of women's and the full development of women with the goal of building a holistic, spiritually and intellectually developed personality.

As we see, in Christianity the attitude towards women is ambiguous. On the one hand, she is interpreted as a derivative of a man, and on the other – as a wife and mother, a carrier of goodness, mercy, caring, love, sacrifice. The Ukrainian national outlook is not characterized by a rigid contrast between natural and cultural. The Ukrainian Orthodox tradition, which partially assimilated pre-Christian beliefs, emphasizes the deification of man in his spiritual and bodily indissolubility and understanding of questions of mental in the aesthetic and ethical space. The mental tradition of the Ukrainian Orthodox picture of the world guides the person to an active, optimistic life position, judicious and balanced attitude towards the needs of the body and spirit.

Understanding a woman in the categories of perfection of the Orthodox faith gives her the status of universal God's creation. According to representatives of the Church, a woman in Orthodoxy is considered a source of piety, so its inner world must conform to its appearance, and pure thoughts are the right thing to do. God's incarnation was realized through a woman; thanks to her the continuity of the human race is ensured. Women peace bearers actually became the first apostles, because they were told about Christ's resurrection and the Holy Mary Magdalene is honored as being Saints. "Being equal before God and having the same human dignity, a man and a woman, however, have different purposes on earth. Man, since he is created stronger, set to go ahead, bear the burden of responsibility, be the leader"<sup>2</sup>. The fulfillment of the Gospel commandments is through the perfection of the individual, leading a woman beyond the limits of policies of mental asymmetry of the patriarchal society.

The most perfect woman is the Mother of God, which showed her perfection not only on everyday life but also on social levels: with a group of like-minded people she followed Jesus, taking part in the sermon of a new revolutionary religion at that time, which brought with it counter-cultural social ethics. The holy women of the Ukrainian Orthodox Pantheon were recruited to the face of the saints through their mercy, educational activities, and participation in the development of the sacred space in the native land, which reveals a certain specificity of the understanding of women's holiness in the Ukrainian national consciousness.

The most prominent Ukrainian women of the Middle Ages and the New Age demonstrated a combination of deep Orthodox faith with successful socio-political, cultural and educational activities<sup>3</sup>. Ukrainian medieval society produced two opposite approaches: stimulated the acquisition of proper education, social activity for women of noble birth and embodied certain restrictions for women of a simple kind, which ensured their dependence on socio-economic circumstances. If the Orthodox picture of the world of Ukrainians testified to the equality of all before God, then the national one – shared the opportunities for women in the social and economic sphere to represent members of different classes of layers.

Structurally-semiotic analysis of archaic ideological notions and symbols of the Ukrainian people, reflected in folklore, testifies, that in the cultural-national picture of the world of Ukrainian women's identity was formed within the framework of a two-level paradigm – mystical and household<sup>4</sup>. In the first paradigm a woman symbolizes the sacred: the creation of the world, the eternity of life, protection from dark forces, the connection between the earthly and heavenly world, is adored as Eternal Femininity, one of the faces of paired deities. At the household level, a woman is perceived as a mother, who, through the birth

<sup>1</sup> Харьковщенко, Є. (2003). *Софійність київського християнства*. Київ: Наук. думка, 224.

<sup>2</sup> Слюсар, Н. (2008). Жінка хай мовчить? Розмови про «гендерну рівність» нині дуже модні. А чи не ущемляються права жінок у Православ'ї? *Управління Волинської єпархії Православної Церкви України* <<http://www.pravoslaviavolyni.org.ua/gazeta/statija/?newsid=841>>. (2008, червень, 27).

<sup>3</sup> Андрусів, С. (2006). *Українки в історії*. Київ: Либідь, 37-39.

<sup>4</sup> Борисенко, В. (2007). *Українська етнологія*. Київ: Либідь, 220-228.

of a child, connects the past, present and future of the family; as a good mistress, who carries on her shoulders the burden of domestic labor. According to the forms and results, this activity can be considered proto-feminist within the Orthodox culture. It is the combination of the Orthodox faith with the active public activities of Ukrainian women laid the foundations of Ukrainian feminism.

Considering the concept of mental and the compatibility of this approach in the field of social philosophy, we should pay attention to feminist views, which reflected mental ideals, stereotypes in religious beliefs and the deconstruction of mental inequality. According to feminist theologians, Christianity is a patriarchal religion. Therefore, for Orthodox, the idea of the possibility of changing mental stereotypes is unacceptable. Indeed, regardless of the changes taking place in a society, the active life position of women, Christianity sees its purpose and implementation only in motherhood. Speaking about the position of men and women in Christianity, it is worth noting that refers only to the sphere of spiritual merging with God, despite equality before God.

Thus, the image of Bereginya is perceived today through the prism of the stereotypes that have been formed in the Ukrainian tradition and identified with the Mother of God<sup>1</sup>. Some scholars regard the image of the woman-Bereginya imposed on Ukrainian society. As noted by A. Kis, it "on the one hand, reproduces conservative mental stereotypes with the characteristic attachment of a woman exclusively to the private sphere (family, home), on the other hand, under the slogan "the revival of tradition" is planting an artificial model of female identification, which in fact has little in common with the Ukrainian past"<sup>2</sup>. That is, according to a researcher, the main semantic load of this image is the absolutization of female reproductive and domestic functions and not the assertion of its "matriarchal" social dominant. In addition to family values, a woman in Orthodoxy is a source of piety, and that's why her inner world has to correspond to her appearance, and pure thoughts must correspond to the right actions: "The danger that awaits Ukrainian women in these circumstances is to create and maintain an illusion of the special and high status of women in Ukraine, which in reality has little in common with the existing social realities. At the same time, such a position actually provides moral grounds for the legitimate displacement of women in the private sphere. Bereginya stereotype is the ideological drug, a self-deception, a way to escape from cruel reality, where a woman is disheartened, exploited, disenfranchised and silent, into the world of dreams – where the entire Ukrainian space revolves around the woman-Bereginya, proudly standing on the pedestal. This myth significantly hinders Ukrainian women from realizing their own problems and perspectives in the socio-political sphere"<sup>3</sup>.

It is these positions that revived knowledge about the "matriarchal stereotype". The polemic concerning the objectivity of this stereotype was initiated by O. Kis in a review of the research by A. Lutsenko, and then deconstructing the stereotype of motherhood and childhood in the Ukrainian tradition. Among the main arguments is the harmfulness of the "neo-romantic retrospective stereotype about a Ukrainian woman" for the development of feminist studies in Ukraine, which in the author's consciousness are associated with the Western-European tradition of feminist critique of science. It is not surprising that "the researcher compares the stereotype of a Ukrainian woman with "a collage of hypertrophied literary images, historical legends and ideological slogans", which is hardly satisfactory, "requests of a serious scientist-ukrainianist". Not less dangerous, according to the author, is "the stereotype of Perfect Motherhood and Childhood in the Ukrainian Tradition".

Interesting and deep considerations A. Kis highlight the starting position: "Having excluded from this patriarchal image of Bereginya this essential component, it will be difficult not to see in it the lack of meaning of ideological exaltation of the Woman in the conditions of existence of real and widespread discrimination"<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, we can speak not only about the author's position but also about the assertion in the Ukrainian historiography of the feminist direction of research on a particular problem. In general, the transfer of research attention from the plane of creating stereotypes to its deconstruction is a natural and favorable phenomenon for the further development of domestic mental studies.

It belongs to the scholars who considered contemporary nation-building in Ukraine through the prism of the creation of tender myths, in particular, the Master of Tender Studies at the Central European

<sup>1</sup> Луценко, О. (1999). *Жіноче начало в українській ментальності. Жіночі студії в Україні: Жінка в історії та сьогодні*. Одеса, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Кісь, О. (2003). Моделі конструювання гендерної ідентичності жінки в сучасній Україні. *І*, 27, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 6.

University in Budapest N. Monakhova. The researcher stresses that "in the process of nation-building in Ukraine, that is, in the process of creating the concept of "Ukrainianity", the modern concept of the patriarchy". It determines the nature of this phenomenon in the deformation of the "process of an ethnic group transformation into a nation" under the Soviet modernization and militarization, when the "model ... of a non-ethnic community based on common social and economic goals" was proposed, and the peasantry, as "the traditional basis of society... survived a series of traumatic experiences"<sup>1</sup>. Observing the activities and rhetoric of women's political organizations allowed the researcher to construct a model for the settlement of modern mental relations in Ukraine. On the one hand, "the need is discussed for the elimination of all forms of discrimination", and on the other – the revival of family values, which are essentially patriarchal. Consequently, N. Monakhova quite naturally emphasizes its controversial nature, which will inevitably lead to a choice in favor of either a different direction. In fact, the researcher left her rhetorical question open.

Mental theory and feminist critique offer a model of female identity, which is formed taking into account such principles: a woman chooses her need for education and the branch of the social and productive sphere for further successful socialization; a woman receives remuneration for her work without any harassment in terms of mental, participates in the control of material values distribution: legally and at the level of everyday culture; a woman uses the same protection of the individual, her property, political, social rights, as well as a man; a woman has the right to defend herself and to fight for her rights by all means accepted for the citizens of her society.

Orthodox faith, which is characterized by such features of Kyiv Christianity as evangelism, tolerance, openness to the world, became for Ukrainian women an inexhaustible source of inspiration and spiritual support in all areas of private and public life. That is why Ukrainian women combine feminism and Orthodox faith as various practices of self-discovery and self-improvement.

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<sup>1</sup> Лабури, О. (2008). Історіографічні аспекти взаємовідносин гендеру і націотворення в Україні. *Науковий часопис НПУ імені М.П. Драгоманова. Історичні науки: Збірник Наукових праць*, 6, 63.